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DEPT FOR NEA/ARP, EAP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/07/2018

TAGS: PREL PINR ELAB KU KN KS

SUBJECT: ROK AMBASSADOR: MINIMAL NORTH KOREAN INFLUENCE IN  
KUWAIT

Classified By: Charge Alan G. Misenheimer for Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) On January 7, CDA met with South Korean Ambassador to Kuwait Keun Ho Song to discuss Republic of Korea (ROK) - Kuwait relations and North Korean (DPRK) influence in Kuwait. DPRK has an embassy in Kuwait and the Kuwait MFA lists eight officials at the embassy. AMB Song noted that there are approximately 3,000 North Korean nationals currently in Kuwait, who are generally low-skilled laborers with a social status roughly equivalent to Bangladeshis (i.e. very low). He commented that there are approximately 1,000 North Koreans in Qatar and 1,500 in the UAE, pursuing similar occupations.

¶2. (C) AMB Song said that North Korean influence in Kuwait is "minimal." On the subject of ROK - DPRK relations in Kuwait, AMB Song said he had little interaction with his DPRK counterparts. He noted, however, that the DPRK Ambassador to Kuwait previously served as North Korea's permanent representative to the United Nations for "some years" and is an unusually polished diplomat whose English skills are quite good.

¶3. (C) Concerning broader ROK - DPRK relations, AMB Song noted the more conservative disposition of President-elect Lee Myung-bak. He said the future of the "sunshine policy" of South Korea vis-a-vis the North will likely not be jettisoned entirely, but will instead be experiencing a "cold breeze."

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MISENHEIMER